Reviewing decision to ban non-iodised salt

700. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item, "Removal of Common salt ban to be disastrous, warn experts", published in the Asian Age dated 19th June, 2000;

(b) if so, the reaction thereto;

(c) whether in view of the reaction of experts and specialists all around, it is proposed to review the decision to remove ban on non-iodised salt being sold; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) There is no ban on sale of non-iodised salt except for direct human consumption. The notification issued on 10.5.2000 seeks public comments on a proposal, to make both iodised and non-iodised salt available for direct human consumption by removing the current restriction on sale of common salt for direct human consumption so that consumers can make their choice voluntarily rather than through consumption. All opinions received in the matter will be carefully considered before a final decision is taken.

Ban on sale of non-iodised salt

701. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN;

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to lift ban on sale of non-iodised salt; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERM A]: (a) and (b) There is no ban on sale of common salt except the restriction on sale for direct * human consumption. As per amendment made in PFA Rules w.e.f. 27.5.1998, only'iodised salt can be sold for direct human consumption. A draft notification has been issued on 10.5.2000, inviting public comments to withdraw this restriction.

The decision to issue this notification was taken in the wake of substained representations receivedfrom various sections of public, to the effect that matters of public health should be left to the 'informed' choice and not enforced through compulsion.

Customs Duty on Vaccines

702. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased *to* state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is heavy customs duty on several vaccines like vaccine against Varicella, Zoster virus, Hepatitis-A virus, Hoemophilus influenzae type B virus, which are not manufactured locally, to the extent of 44 per cent; and

(b) whether Government propose to lower down the customs duty on such vaccines which are highly cost intensive and if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) The general rate of basic customs duty on several vaccines, including vaccines against varicella-Zoster virus, Hepatitis-A virus, Hoemophilus influenzae type B virus is 35%. In rvioition, these vaccines attract a surcharge of 10% of basic customs duty and speciai additional duty of customs of 4%.

(b) The matter relating to rate of customs duty on such vaccines is presently under examination by the Government.